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INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7150  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 7479  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 2815  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 5520  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 6633  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3267  
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RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0491  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 4792  
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
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SUBJECT: NEPAL-CHINA BORDER: FACT AND FICTION

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Media reports indicate the Government of Nepal (GON) is deploying armed police along its 884 mile northern border with China in response to pressure from the Chinese government to prevent Tibetan activism. These reports are overstated; the GON does not have the resources to fortify this mountainous border region.

¶2. (U) On October 6, Reuters reported Nepal will deploy armed police along its largely unguarded border with Tibet, raising criticism that pressure from China, a key donor and trading partner, prompted the move. The article quoted Home Minister Bhim Rawal, "We want to secure our borders from any trans-border movement by any criminal elements...not because of the insistence of any country." A Nepalese editor told Reuters, "What this reflects is China's extreme sensitivity to the possibility of Nepal being used as a springboard for Tibetan nationalism."

¶3. (SBU) These reports overstate the reality of the buildup of the Armed Police Force (APF) along the Nepal-China border. The police presence on the 884 mile border has been limited to the temporary placement of a company of 100-120 personnel at each of the five major border crossings -- a total of 850 rotating personnel, far short of the intended 10,000 claimed by Nepali vernacular media. Police contacts told post that some newly placed officers, suffering in tents battered by snow and freezing temperatures, have threatened to resign because they do not have the equipment or training to perform their duties in the harsh Himalayan climate. One contact said many of these personnel have already been pulled back from the border. The APF has not received any additional personnel, funding, or training for northern border operations; current security resources have been obligated primarily to Nepal's southern Terai region along the Indian border.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Whether the APF's efforts are indicative of a shift in GON policy to tighten control of its border with Tibet or a gesture to placate Chinese pressure is largely irrelevant. The GON does not have the resources for a significant police presence on its northern border and would be unable to build or maintain permanent posts without assistance.

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